

# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #164, April 27–May 17  
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

## THE UNBEARABLE WHITENESS OF BEING

by Linda  
Martín Alcoff

p8



MARLENA BUZEK SMITH

The Mission and Social Justice Ministry of The Riverside Church,  
**THE BRECHT FORUM** and Critical Resistance Presents...

conversations  
UPTOWN



## THE WORLD WE WANT IS THE WORLD WE NEED

Featuring  
**ANGELA Y. DAVIS**  
**RUTHIE GILMORE**  
**VIJAY PRASHAD**

Moderator:  
**LAURA FLANDERS,**  
GRIT TV

**The Riverside Church**  
490 Riverside Drive  
(Between 120-122 Streets)

TICKETS: \$20/\$30/\$50/\$100  
\$10 Students and Groups

\$100 - \$250 for Special  
Reception with Angela Davis

**MAY 20**  
7PM

TICKETS: **brechtforum.org**

FOR MORE INFO: 212-242-4201





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*The Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays for our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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# community calendar

MAY

**SUN MAY 1**

12pm • Free

**RALLY: INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY.** Stand in solidarity with labor activists and community members from across the city to commemorate International Workers Day and demand economic and political justice for all. The rally will be followed by a march to Foley Square.  
Union Square  
212-633-6646 • may1.info

7-11:30pm • \$10

**PARTY: PICTURE THE HOMELESS MAY DAY AFTER-PARTY.** After spending the day at May 1 protests, enjoy drinks, food, music and dancing with Picture the Homeless and continue to celebrate all workers' struggles.

The Commons Brooklyn,  
388 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn  
646-314-6423 • thecommonsbrooklyn.org

**MON MAY 2**

8pm • Free

**MEETING: PLAN THE 19TH ANNUAL DYKE MARCH.** Come to the first planning meeting to share your ideas and suggestions for a march protesting discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community. The meeting is open to all self-identified women.  
NYC LGBTQ Community Services Center,  
208 W 13th St  
dykes@dykemarchnyc.org

**THURS MAY 5**

7-9pm • Free

**READING: OUR ONLY WEAPON, OUR SPIRIT.** On the 30th anniversary of Bobby Sands' death as part of the Irish Hunger Strike, a new book of his prison writings will be released. Hear selections of Sands' poetry, essays and diary entries read by Samuel Conway and Patrick Stanley. Food and drinks will be served.  
The Commons Brooklyn,  
388 Atlantic Ave, Brooklyn  
347-689-3908 • thecommonsbrooklyn.org

7:30pm • \$6/\$10/\$15

**TALK: MARX ON RACE, CLASS AND COLONIALISM.** To mark the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War, the Brecht Forum hosts a lecture that will examine Marx's writings on class, race and slavery in the Civil War. The talk will be given by Kevin B. Anderson, professor of sociology, political science, and femi-

nist studies at UC Santa Barbara.  
Brecht Forum, 451 West St  
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

**SAT MAY 7**

7:30 pm • \$4

**PANEL: LABOR STRIKES BACK — HOW WORKERS CAN WIN AGAINST THE CORPORATE BACKLASH.** Join union leaders and members to discuss how to organize against nationwide cutbacks to wages and social services. An international buffet will be served at 6:30pm for a donation of \$9.  
Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St  
212-222-063 • fsp@nycnet

**FRI MAY 13**

7pm • Free

**MEMORIAL: LEONARD WEINGLASS.** Commemorate the life of the renowned radical lawyer Leonard Weinglass who passed away March 23, 2011.  
New York Society for Ethical Culture,  
2 W 64th St  
212-874-5210 • nysec.org

8pm • \$25 sugg

**BENEFIT: TRIBUTE TO FOLK SINGER ANNE FEENEY.** Pete Seeger, Brooklyn Women's Chorus, Dave Lippman, George Mann and the NYC Labor Chorus will perform to raise money for Feeney, who is battling small-cell lung cancer.  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Center Auditorium  
310 W 43rd St • annefeeney.com

**SUN MAY 15**

1pm • Free

**RALLY: RIGHT TO RETURN.** The Organizing Committee for Al-Nakba Commemoration calls upon members of the Palestinian and Arab communities and all allies committed to justice for the Palestinian people to join in front of the U.N. building and demand the right for Palestinian refugees to return to their home.  
Dag Hammarskjold Plaza,  
885 Second Ave  
may15rally@gmail.com

**THU MAY 19**

6-9pm • Free

**SCREENING: JEWS AND BASEBALL: AN AMERICAN LOVE STORY.** Come learn about the contributions of Jewish major leaguers and discuss the film with director Peter Miller and sports writer Dave

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**THU MAY 5 • 7:30-9:30 PM**

**CLASS: HUBERT HARRISON, THEODORE W. ALLEN & THE CONTINUING CENTRALITY OF THE FIGHT AGAINST WHITE SUPREMACY.** This six-session class, taught by Jeffrey B. Perry and others, will focus on Harrison and Allen two autodidactic, anti-white supremacist working class intellectuals.  
**Sliding scale: \$65-\$85**

**TUE MAY 10 • 7:30 PM**

**BOOK PARTY / FORUM: TO END ALL WARS: A STORY OF LOYALTY AND REBELLION, 1914-1918.** In his new book, Adam Hochschild focuses on the long-ignored moral drama of the critics of World War I.  
**Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15**

**SAT MAY 21-SUN MAY 22 • 9:00 AM**

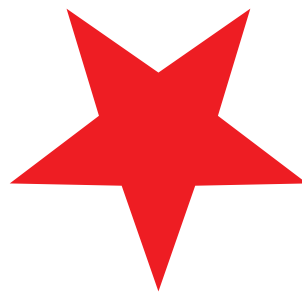
**WORKSHOP: EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO PAULO FREIRE'S CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES.** This is an introductory hands-on workshop in the use of popular education concepts and techniques. Co-sponsored by the Institute for Popular Education.  
**Sliding scale: \$65-\$85**

**PLEASE REGISTER ONLINE:**  
[brechtforum.org](http://brechtforum.org)  
212-242-4201

## THE BRECHT FORUM

**BUILDING  
A MOVEMENT  
THAT MOVES**

**451 West Street  
(btwn Bank and Bethune)**



Zirin after the screening. Co-sponsored by New York Labor History Association and LaborArts.org.  
NYU/KJCC Screening Room  
53 Washington Square S  
212-998-2636 • newyorklaborhistory.org

**FRI MAY 20**

7pm • \$20/\$30/\$50/\$100

**FUNDRAISER: THE WORLD WE WANT IS THE WORLD WE NEED.** Support Critical Resistance and the Brecht Forum and spend the evening with three profoundly important thinkers Angela Y. Davis, Ruth Gilmore and Vijay Prashad. The discussion will be moderated by GRITtv host Laura Flanders. Discounts are available for students and groups.  
Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive  
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

**SIGN UP TO RECEIVE OUR WEEKLY CALENDAR VIA EMAIL AT [INDYPENDENT.ORG](http://INDYPENDENT.ORG/).**

## WHERE DO I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

**BELOW 14<sup>TH</sup> ST.**

**WBAI - 99.5FM**  
120 Wall St., 10th floor

**Bluestockings**  
172 Allen St.

**Housing Works**  
126 Crosby St.

**Hudson Park Branch Library**  
66 Leroy St.

**Mercer St. Books**  
206 Mercer St.

**Whole Earth Bakery**  
130 St. Marks Place

**Brecht Forum**  
451 West St.

**4th Street Food Co-op**  
58 E. 4th St.

**Theater for the New City**  
155 First Ave.

**DC 37 Headquarters**  
125 Barclay St.

**14<sup>TH</sup> TO 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.**

**New York Public Library Epiphany Branch**  
228 E. 23rd St.

**Chelsea Square Restaurant**  
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

**Manhattan Neighborhood Network**  
537 W. 59th St.

**New York Public Library Muhlenberg Branch**  
209 W. 23rd St.

**St. Agnes Branch Library**  
444 Amsterdam Ave.  
(btwn 81st and 82nd Sts.)

**ABOVE 96<sup>TH</sup> ST.**

**New York Public Library George Bruce Branch**  
518 W. 125th St.

**Book Culture**  
526 W. 112th St.

**New York Public Library Harlem Branch**  
9 W. 124th St.

**New York Public Library Hamilton Grange Branch**  
503 W. 145th St.

**Uptown Sister's Books**  
156 St. & Amsterdam

**Bloomingdale Branch Library**  
150 W. 100th St.

**BROOKLYN Brooklyn Museum**  
200 Eastern Pkwy.

**BAM**  
30 Lafayette Ave.

**Tillie's of Brooklyn**  
248 DeKalb Ave.

**Tea Lounge**  
Union St. & Seventh Ave.

**Video Gallery**  
310 Seventh Ave.

**Ozzie's Coffee Shop**  
249 5th Ave.  
57 Seventh Ave.

**Verb Café**  
Bedford Ave. & N. 5th St.

**Pillow Café**  
505 Myrtle Ave.

**Sisters Community Hardware**  
900 Fulton St.

**Brooklyn Public Library Pacific Street Branch**  
25 Fourth Ave.

**K-Dog & Dune Buggy**  
43 Lincoln Rd.

**Outpost Café**  
1014 Fulton St.

**Blackbird Café**  
197 Bedford Ave.

**'sNice Café**  
315 Fifth Ave.

**Purity Diner**  
43 Underhill Ave.

**Brooklyn Public Library Bedford Branch**  
496 Franklin St.

**BRONX Brook Park**  
141st St. & Brook Ave.

**Mothers on the Move**  
928 Intervale Ave.

**The Point**  
940 Garrison Ave.

**New York Public Library Mott Haven Library**  
321 E. 140th St.

**STATEN ISLAND St. George Library**  
5 Central Ave.

**Port Richmond Branch Library**  
75 Bennett St.

**Dot Com Cafe**  
36 Bay St.

**Everything Goes Book Café**  
208 Bay St.

**A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE**

**Phone: 212-904-1282**

**E-mail: [contact@indypendent.org](mailto:contact@indypendent.org)**



# May Day Solidarity

BY ELIZABETH HENDERSON

In the wake of collective bargaining attacks in the Midwest, anti-immigrant state legislation throughout the country and a real unemployment rate of nearly 16 percent, a broad coalition of labor and immigrant rights groups will be holding rallies in New York City on May Day.

While the two demonstrations will start out at separate locations —Foley Square and Union Square — they will converge for a final rally at Foley Square later in the afternoon.

The main groups involved in organizing the May Day Our Day demonstration — the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights and the Labor Rights, Immigrant Rights, Jobs for All Coalition — say they want to present a broad opposition to the current attacks on labor unions and immigrant workers.

“I think that all of the organizers for both rallies recognized that our survival depends on our unity and solidarity,” said Teresa Gutierrez, co-coordinator of the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights.

While the May 1st Coalition has been holding rallies at Union Square since 2005, the Foley Square May Day event started last year, with labor groups primarily spearheading the efforts.

“We call on all people of good will to join in denouncing the ongoing attacks on labor, bargaining rights, wages, benefits and the indelible right of all workers to join unions throughout this nation,” said Sonia Ivany, co-chair of the Foley Square Rally and president of the NYC Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.

A broad cross-section of immigrant

## TAKE IT TO WALL STREET

Calling it “The Day We Made Wall Street Stand Still,” a coalition of city unions and community organizations is planning to bring an anti-austerity message to the center of the Financial District on May 12. With the United Federation of Teachers and SEIU Local 1199 taking a leading role, organizers are hoping for a large turnout. The protesters will demand that Mayor Bloomberg stop proposed budget cuts and attacks on public sector workers and instead make the financial industry help pay for the economic crisis they started. For more information, see [facebook.com/onmay12](http://facebook.com/onmay12).

—JOHN TARLETON

rights, labor, antiwar and religious groups will attend both rallies.

Plans are already in the works for the two groups to work together on May Day 2012.

Gutierrez says the May 1st Coalition's next step after the rally will be to launch a campaign against mass deportations of immigrants. Hundreds of thousands of people have been deported through the Secure Communities program, which enables local police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to share information about immigrants' legal status.

“[This] is a tsunami of injustice,” Gutierrez said.



**MONEY FOR JOBS, NOT WAR:** Protesters march down Broadway from Union Square to Foley Square during an April 9 demonstration organized by the United National Antiwar Committee. An estimated 5,000 people protested against the wars in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq, the Guantanamo prison camp and the harsh punishment meted out to accused WikiLeaks Bradley Manning.

Photo: Sophie Forbes

# Meet the New Boss...

BY JOHN TARLETON

Incoming Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott has been hailed as everything — courteous, savvy, a consensus builder, a regular man of the people — that his predecessor Cathie Black was not before she was unceremoniously dumped by Mayor Michael Bloomberg on April 7. The rush to embrace Walcott as the anti-Black was embodied in a *New York Times* puff piece in which the paper of record reached back to an ancient anecdote from Walcott's time in a recreational football league that shows him as both a scrappy competitor and a man of almost Gandhian forbearance.

However, Walcott, 59, who has served as a deputy mayor for education and community development since 2002, will not have any more of a say over the next steps for education in the city than Bloomberg's hand-picked school board. Instead, he will be tasked with advancing the mayor's top-

down, business-oriented restructuring of the city's 1.1 million student public school system during the final two-and-a-half years of Bloomberg's administration.

Here are some flashpoints to watch for as Bloomberg and Walcott push forward:

- **More school closings and co-locations:** Under Bloomberg's watch, the Department of Education (DOE) has closed more than 100 public schools and subsequently carved them up for use by smaller, more selective schools, many of them privately run charter schools. Dozens of others public schools have had charters co-locate inside their buildings and take valuable space, a process that has also roiled neighborhoods across the city. Expect Walcott to offer conciliatory words, but with the more than doubling of the state limit on the number of charter schools last year, school closures and co-locations are likely to continue.

- **Increasing class size:** Lower class size is one of the few reforms that have been shown to consistently improve student performance.

This is especially true in the formative early years of a child's education. Yet, class size in city schools has steadily increased in the past three years, including in grades K–3. At an April 7 meeting with parents at a Park Slope elementary school, DOE officials were showered with boos when they disclosed that class size limits were being boosted to 25 students for kindergarten and 32 for first grade. “What makes [P.S. 107] unique is the intimacy of it,” one parent told the *Park Slope Patch*. “It's being ripped out from under us.”

- **Teacher layoffs:** Crowded classrooms may be a pressing concern for parents, but not the mayor. Instead, he has threatened to cut as many as 6,000 teacher positions in the hopes of forcing concessions on teacher seniority rules that would make it easier to get rid of higher-salaried veteran teachers in favor of cheaper new hires. It appears as if the Democratic-controlled State Assembly won't give Bloomberg what he wants this year but look for him



**Company man:** Incoming Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott.



**Mayor Bloomberg:** Still calling the shots.

and Walcott to continue pushing the issue.

- **School construction:** Thirty percent fewer new school seats were created in the first six years of the Bloomberg administration than in the last six years under his predecessor Rudy Giuliani. Now, one-fourth of elementary schools have kindergarten waiting lists. When a group of Lower Manhattan parents complained to Cathie Black about school overcrowding, she joked that they should use birth control. Walcott won't make those kinds of gaffes, but after years of underinvestment a sustained period of new school construction will be needed to address the overcrowding crisis.

- **Clicks not bricks:** Last November the DOE announced it would create 50,000 new class seats by 2014. By April, the goal had been scaled down to 29,000 seats though there was no change in enrollment. Meanwhile, the latest 2010–2014 Capital Plan calls for \$957 million to be spent on establishing online learning systems at 400 schools over the next two to three years (including \$540 million in Fiscal Year 2012) as the Bloomberg administration pursues its vision of entire classrooms of students taking courses (and standardized tests) online. To date, there has been no independent research done that shows this form of learning is more effective for schoolchildren.



# FREEDOM FIGHTER

PHOTOS BY SOPHIE FORBES, STORY BY RENÉE FELTZ

**R**AVI RAGBIR IS A FIXTURE in New York City's immigrant rights community, but until recently few people realized he is at risk of deportation. The 15-year legal resident has helped hundreds of people as a paid organizer with the New Sanctuary Movement and "Deportation 101" instructor with Families for Freedom. He faces removal to Trinidad — without a single meaningful hearing in immigration court — because of a conviction for wire fraud a decade ago. Now he has marshaled a grassroots team of activists and lawyers to take his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.



**'THERE'S ALWAYS IMMINENT DANGER':** Every Monday at 8:30 a.m. Ravi checks in at the Brooklyn office of the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP), run by a private company that contracts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). 'You never know what could happen,' says Ravi, noting that ISAP employees can take him back into custody at each visit. 'When I hand in my card and I leave, I feel relieved. I know this week it's done.' His wife, Amy Gottlieb, and Catherine Stetts, a member of his support team from Judson Memorial Church, come along on each visit. 'I want people at ICE to know that he is part of community that supports him,' says Stetts.



**CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WITH A FACADE OF NORMALCY:** After each check-in at the ISAP office Ravi and Catherine have breakfast at a diner around the corner. He types a quick text to his supporters to let them know how the meeting went. 'Left ISAP. All is good.' They text back messages such as 'Thank God, Thank God.'



**'I CAN RELATE TO THEM':** Ravi networks with Haitian immigrants at a rally marking the one-year anniversary of the earthquake that devastated their country. Many take notes about a program he helps coordinate that accompanies people facing deportation. 'The Obama administration halted deportations to Haiti after the earthquake, but in December they started picking people back up,' says Ravi. If Haitian immigrants are freed pending their deportation, they must check-in with ISAP just like him. 'I tell them we can help with witnessing. We cannot do anything if they get taken in, but we can document what is going on.'





**'RAVI IS THE BEST ADVOCATE FOR HIMSELF OUT OF ALL OF US':** Ravi and his defense committee meet with the Yale Supreme Court Advocacy Clinic to discuss how to convince the U.S. Supreme Court to grant him a new hearing in immigration court to decide whether his conviction requires deportation under the law. 'Most people think that when a person is facing deportation they'll get to go before a judge and explain the positive things in their life that

might balance out any sort of negative mark a past conviction might leave or present evidence about the nature of that conviction,' says Alina Das, who represents Ravi and works at NYU's Immigrant Rights Clinic. 'If Ravi wins his case this could open the door for others to have their day in court as well.'



Renée Feltz

**CIRCLE OF HOPE:** Ravi prays at Riverside Church with members of his support committee. 'This past summer we were very scared when we learned the federal court had denied his petition — often the government will deport people at that stage,' says Das, Ravi's attorney. 'Ravi pushed through that moment with us, and brought in a whole group of people dedicated to his case. That was a huge moment personally to me.' The defense committee, a group including friends, clergy and organizers, 'stemmed from this idea that we can look at different legal options and also add pressure from media attention and community and faith organizations,' adds Manisha Vaze of Families for Freedom.

## LEARN MORE

*American Friends Service Committee:*  
[afsc.org](http://afsc.org) • 215-241-7000

*Deportation Nation*  
[DeportationNation.org](http://DeportationNation.org)  
[Twitter.com/DeportNation](https://twitter.com/DeportNation)

*Families for Freedom*  
[familiesforfreedom.org](http://familiesforfreedom.org) • 646-290-5551

*The New Sanctuary Coalition of NYC*  
[newsanctuarynyc.org](http://newsanctuarynyc.org) • 646-395-2925

**Visit [independent.org](http://independent.org) to see a multi-media story about Ravi's struggle.**

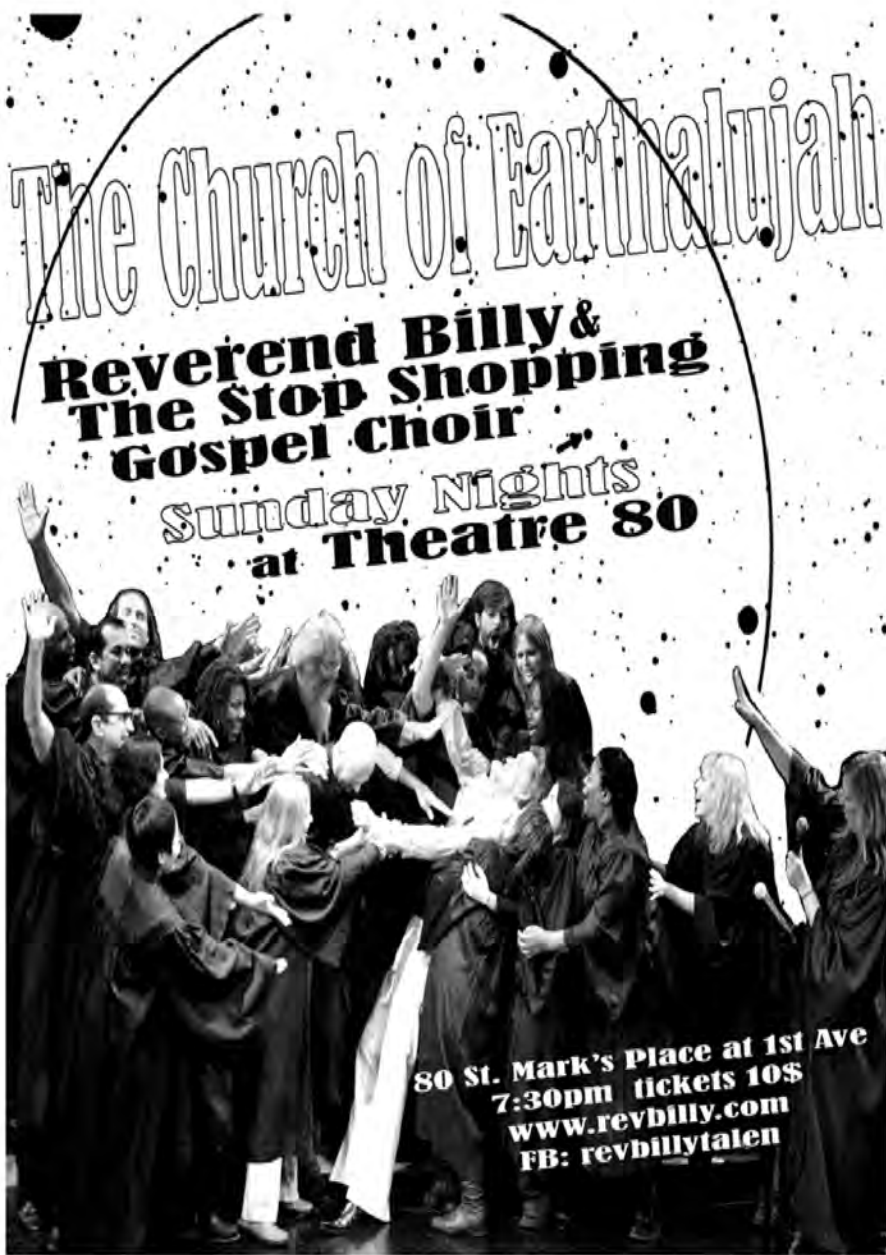


**'WE GOT MARRIED BECAUSE WE WANT TO BE TOGETHER':** Last summer Ravi married Gottlieb, director of the American Friends Service Committee's Immigrant Rights Program, who holds their wedding-day picture (above). At the time of their marriage, he was wearing an ankle bracelet that allowed ICE to monitor whether he was inside New York City limits. On the first night of their honeymoon, they accidentally ventured into Long Island. 'Suddenly the ankle monitor started beeping, like an alarm going off,' recalls Gottlieb. 'Then you hear a voice saying, "Exiting master zone, exiting master zone." It was terrifying. It was a reality check of what the time with Ravi was going to be like.' Since their marriage, ICE has allowed Ravi to exchange his ankle monitor for weekly check-ins.



**HOLDING ON:** Ravi and Amy prepare to have friends over for a potluck dinner to discuss updates in his case. 'To the outside person who doesn't have to live through this, they are not hearing what I hear in my head. "Is this the day I'll be deported? Where will I live?"' Ravi says he tries to think instead 'about all the things I want to do, should do, need to do. It is not just about myself. Until we change the system, hundreds of thousands of people are in the same situation as me every day.'





# Washington's Theater

## REAL DEFICITS, FAKE BATTLES

BY RICHARD D. WOLFF

On April 19, China's Foreign Ministry urged the U.S. government to be "responsible" by reducing its huge budget deficits to "safeguard investors' interests." This came one day after Standard & Poor's issued a "negative" outlook for U.S. government debt since its debts were rising far faster than its production of goods and services — the national wealth that ultimately backs the nation's debts.

China's statement was noteworthy because it is the largest foreign creditor of the United States, which is now the world's largest debtor country. It is estimated that China has invested two-thirds of its \$3 trillion in foreign currency reserves in U.S. dollar-denominated securities (chiefly U.S. Treasury obligations).

What worries both China and Standard & Poor's are huge U.S. budget deficits resulting from the crisis that began in 2007. The deficit exploded for two reasons: the decision to borrow trillions of dollars for corporate bailouts and a persistently weak economy that has crippled tax revenues. The U.S. government's budget is also stretched by historically low taxes on the wealthy and corporations, outlays for wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Pakistan, and the steadily rising cost of providing expensive private medical care to the elderly and poor.

Does the United States have the means to pay the interest on its \$14.3 trillion national debt? Will politicians be able to tax more or cut government programs enough to pay the fast-rising interest costs?

### RIISING INTEREST RATES

If little or nothing is done about the deficit — and that is precisely what Washington's politicians seem determined to do — then lenders will likely demand rising interest rates on rising debt levels to offset the rising risk of lending to the United States. That will make the problem worse, slowly but steadily, as the United States replicates the debt crises that have brought countries like Greece and Portugal to their knees.

The recent highly publicized debate over the federal budget was hardly encouraging. To maximize public attention, Republicans and Democrats threatened a government shutdown. Both parties said large annual budget deficits and accumulated debt were "serious problems." They agreed the solutions required only spending cuts, not revenue increases. In unison, they repeated, "we" must "learn to live within our means."

Numbers tell the true story. In January, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated the U.S. budget at \$3.71 trillion for fiscal year 2011 and tax revenues around \$2.23 trillion. The difference of \$1.48 trillion is the projected deficit. The "historic compromise" struck by Republicans and Democrats in April nipped spending by \$38 billion. Even if those savings comes to pass — the CBO estimates the final budget will trim just \$20 billion to \$25 billion and virtually none of that in 2011 — it leaves about 98 percent of the deficit untouched. The sound and fury of Washington's debates

signified nothing was to be done about the actual deficit.

Republicans act deeply troubled by huge deficits but they conveniently forget why deficits soared: Increased unemployment and underemployment pinched income tax receipts, and Washington borrowed trillions of dollars to bail out banks and credit and stock markets and to fund stimulus programs (much of which was tax breaks). To address the crisis, Republicans have revived their old mantra: cut "wasteful spending" and "government mismanagement," which means axing social programs they don't like. Republicans hope to capitalize on popular anger over the bailout and stimulus costs and the government's unfair and ineffectual response.

Democrats also pretend to be troubled by deficits, parroting Republicans in denouncing government waste and mismanagement. However, they champion fewer cuts, hoping to benefit politically from popular support for social welfare programs. Democrats also loudly oppose measures, such as terminating federal funding for Planned Parenthood, that motivate their base.

Democrats and Republicans did not even discuss, let alone agree on, tax increases on the wealthy or on corporations as ways to cut deficits. At the same time, Republicans limited themselves to economically symbolic cuts while Democrats posed as defenders of social spending. Aiming at the 2012 election, both parties used the deficit and budget debates purely to impress their voters. In short, the two parties' deficit-reduction campaigns were smoke and mirrors.

### SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Deficits matter because when the government's tax revenues fall short of expenditures, it must borrow the difference. That borrowing adds to the national debt. As a result, more and more tax revenues must now be used for interest payments on the bulging debt. Instead of funding public services and programs that help people, tax revenues will enrich Washington's creditors. Also, Republicans and conservative Democrats use the deficits as an excuse to bludgeon government programs they oppose.

Conservatives in both parties fear and oppose government economic intervention apart from aiding business interests. Generally in a recession, conservatives support tax cuts for business and little else. When major recessions hit, they back massive bailouts of businesses. If those require deficits, the conservatives support them as most did with the Bush and Obama bailouts from 2008 to 2010. They turn against deficits only after corporate profits recover, and then demand government curtail any intervention in the economy other than what benefits business interests.

Usually favoring deficits during a recession, liberals and Keynesians want government to soften hardships and compensate for businesses' hesitancy to invest in poor economic conditions. Liberals fear that crises may turn people against capitalism or toward extremism. Thus Paul Krugman angrily urges Obama to increase spending and



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LUCY VALKURY

not worry about deficits. Such enthusiasm makes liberals and Keynesians underestimate the real impact of deficits and who will likely have to pay for them.

There are other problems with the liberals' logic. First, government could maintain high spending and keep deficits manageable if it taxed corporations and the wealthy more. One recent calculation showed that if corporations and anyone earning over \$1 million a year were taxed based on the rates in 1961, the U.S. Treasury would collect an additional \$716 billion per year. This would lop in half the 2011 deficit and subsequent interest costs. Second, the greater our deficits, the more of our taxes go to pay Uncle Sam's major creditors: China, Japan and large corporations and wealthy individuals around the world. Third, tax rates for corporations and the rich have been reduced dramatically for decades, causing deficits to balloon. To plug the fiscal hole, Washington turned around and borrowed from the corporations and the rich the money it granted them in tax breaks.

The bottom line: U.S. capitalism collapsed in 2008 and required trillions of dollars in ongoing government life support. It chooses to fund the bailouts through massive borrowing rather than by raising taxes on corporations and the rich — not even those corporations saved from certain bankruptcy. Thus, huge bailouts required huge deficits.

On April 13, Obama suggested raising the top tax bracket from 35 to 39 percent (compared to the 91 percent it was in the 1950s). He resurrected the same increase he

abandoned in his December 2010 deal with the Republicans. If enacted, this tax increase would yield less than \$100 billion per year. That would cut this year's deficit by a mere 7 percent.

For fiscal year 2012, the Obama administration is requesting \$1.034 trillion in all military expenditures, according to the National Priorities Project. Cutting funds for wars, the Pentagon, CIA, homeland security and related programs could achieve major deficit reductions in combination with raised taxes on the rich and corporations. As with all large cuts, they would need to be planned. For example, eliminating weapons programs could be partially offset by increased spending on new "green" mass transportation systems in and around cities. Such planning could generate more and better secondary benefits for the U.S. economy than military spending.

Both parties in Washington have sustained massive ongoing deficits to support a crippled, state-dependent capitalism. Fake political debates around deficits should not distract us from the subservience capitalism has demanded and obtained from both of its parties nor from the urgent need to build a real opposition to them both.

*Richard D. Wolff is Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and a visiting professor at The New School. He is the author most recently of Capitalism Hits the Fan: The Global Economic Melt-down and What to Do about It.*

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# The Unbearable Whiteness of Being

By Linda Martín Alcoff

White Americans will lose their majority status by 2050 if not sooner. Will this make a difference to U.S. domestic and foreign policy or the sanitized image of U.S. history?

As historian of whiteness Nell Painter recently put it, “being white these days is not what it used to be.” What it used to be was the invisible default, the norm, the comfortable majority. Soon to be gone with the wind.

What it means to be white is in high ferment. Census reports have been tolling the bell of an impending white minority status for some time, but even those who only read the sports page know the demographic future: Latinos and Asians are found today even in the ranks of the National Football League.

Millions of urban whites have been experiencing minority status for decades. New York, Miami, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Detroit, Tampa, Baltimore and Philadelphia are all major cities with a white minority, and more cities are moving in that direction. Some believe that we can reverse course if we put a full stop to immigration and make the life of the undocumented such a living hell that they return home, or just die, but most know better. The jump in Latino numbers, for example, is from new births, not immigration.

Without a doubt, the present-day character and lived experience of whiteness in the United States is undergoing as significant a transformation today as it did a century ago when southern Europeans and the Irish became accepted members of the club. Today, new

Latino sub-groupings are poised for inclusion as white, the racial identities of mixed folks are increasingly muddy, and whiteness itself has moved from an invisible default position to an apprehensive self-awareness. Most important, the point of view of non-whites is visible, even in the mainstream and the suburbs.

### WRITING ON THE WALL

The 2010 U.S. census paints a detailed picture of our changing face. From 2000 to 2010, the population increased by nearly 10 percent to 308 million. Latinos and Asians contributed the most to this jump, with each group increasing its numbers by 43 percent. But African-Americans went up as well, by 12 percent, and “American Indians and Alaska Natives” jumped 18 percent. The white population lagged markedly behind, increasing only by 1 percent, and losing five points of its share overall. Whites dropped from 69 percent of the population to 64 percent, but even this number is misleading since the category of “white” includes Arabs and North Africans.

The writing on the wall is unmistakable and irreversible, and it may not even be written in English. By 2050 (some demographers say 2042) European-Americans will slip below majority status. For the first time in its history, the U.S. will be a majority non-white nation. The mind reels. Will this make a difference to its foreign policy, or its domestic policy? Will the non-white majority revise and correct the sanitized ideological image of the history of the United States and its role in the world, bringing slavery, genocide, colonialism and imperialism out from the footnotes? And how will whites respond?

Even after 2050, whites will remain the largest plurality. More important, our liberal inheritance laws have produced a cross-generational payoff of white privilege. The distribution of economic resources will not change as quickly as the demograph-

ics because, as Andrew Hacker revealed in his study *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, the way race affects economics is not measured in wages but in real estate (most households’ primary source of wealth). African-Americans families have only 10 cents for every dollar of white wealth and Latinos only 12 cents. And the most recent mortgage crises hit the newest and poorest homeowners — disproportionately people of color — the hardest. United for a Fair Economy estimates that the burst subprime mortgage bubble caused losses of between \$146 billion and \$190 billion for African-Americans and Latinos.

### RACE AND CLASS

National responses to the mortgage crisis highlight the intersections between economics and cultural forces, or in other words, the relationship between race and class. The Tea Party movement vilified government-supported mortgage lenders like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae for helping first-time home buyers, creating images of fiscally irresponsible people of color with inadequate salaries buying up McMansions — an update on the 1980s trope of the welfare queen. Falling home values for white families were blamed not on Wall Street but on dark folk trying to cheat the system.

The obvious falsity of this claim suggests that economic motives cannot explain the white reaction. Anyone really concerned about falling mortgage values would seek out the real culprit, not some racist fairy tale. As with the issue of Obama’s birth certificate, one senses a willful ignorance here, a conscious embrace of the patently absurd. Jean-Paul Sartre nailed this phenomenon in his analysis of French anti-Semitism during the turbulent 1940s, connecting it to a racialized form of nationalism. Who were these Jews to claim French soil as their own? Today we hear redolent echoes of the same sneers in the Tea Party movement’s call to “take our country back.”

But unlike French Gentiles, white Americans will soon be outnumbered. And they know this.

The Tea Party, amazingly, is not all white, with 5 percent identifying as Black, Asian or of Hispanic origin according to a 2010 *New York Times* poll. More significant is the fact that whites are split over whether to support it. A June 2010 ABC News poll showed that even 45 percent of white Southerners disapprove of the Tea Party.

Whites have also remained split over Obama, and opinion polls reveal significant divergences between whites and non-whites on race-related matters. But we may be overlooking important data from such surveys. For example, according to the Gallup Poll, 56 percent of whites disapprove of the abusive treatment of immigrants in the United States, 51 percent believe racism is widespread, and 44 percent believe racism is a factor in blacks’ rates of incarceration. While the disparity between whites and non-whites on racial issues can reach nearly 40 percentage points, nearly half of white Americans do agree with the overwhelming majority of people of color on such issues. Does this mean they are divided and will soon be conquered?

### MEET THE GUIDETTES

The imaginary of whiteness, or its collective unconscious, is undergoing an alteration that affects the sensibilities of young whites today, as well as all those who aspire to be included as white. White expectations of having a whites-only home, school, or neighborhood bar are decreasing, and the number of interracial couplings including whites is steadily rising. The meanings and connotations of whiteness are shifting along with its power, which is no longer unchecked. We can find signs of this changing white imaginary in expressive cultural forms both high and low, from the attempt to assimilate to a Hip-Hop culture, sales of salsa surpassing those of ketchup and the unapologetic avowals of Guido identity on television shows such as *The Jersey Shore* (including by cast members without a trace of Italian ancestry).

Not all whites have negative and fearful reactions to their impending minority status. In the post-civil rights era, white attitudes have changed significantly about issues such as neighborhood integration, interracial dating and whether racism is wrong. Age is of course a central factor here, but that bodes well for the future. Younger whites have grown up with more everyday interaction with non-whites, and it’s often on an equal footing, not simply with servants or underlings. Young whites also gravitate toward strongly assertive forms of African American expressive culture, from music to comedy. The limitations of this support have been well documented and analyzed, as when the preference for aesthetic style stops short of actual support for political goals such as economic reparations for African Americans. But the change in outlook and in experience may mean real change is on the horizon.

So here is the central question: Can whites be a part of the rainbow, as whites? What role can whites play in the new rainbow-colored national landscape? Can we imagine a future in which whiteness itself has been, in some sense, (partially) redeemed?

This requires addressing how whites can be a part of the rainbow as whites, and not just as women, gays and lesbians, working-

class people, the disabled or any other group-related identity that might offset potential conflicts and jump-start an easy talk of commonality. Whether as activists in labor unions, LGBT student groups or any other liberatory organizations, whites are present as whites. The effects of white identity retain an influence over modes of interaction, general background knowledge and the emotional responses that make up our substantive ways of being. We still dance differently.

### ‘NEUTRAL MAN’S BURDEN’

White efforts to formulate antiracist responses to the hysteria of Tea Party reaction, as well as to demographic turning points, will be important to watch, analyze and assist. The popular website Stuff White People Like has inaugurated a healthy dose of self-deprecating humor while revealing the superficiality of some avowals of antiracism, although it can veer off into an unhelpful cynicism and its target is really liberal yuppies. Stephen Colbert’s hilarious sketch on the “Neutral Man’s Burden” usefully names the sense of an entitlement to being the normal, invisible center, precisely what will soon be forced to change. Whiteness studies has been diligently uncovering the racial substance of U.S. history, politics and culture, measuring its economic payoff and providing enhanced tools for interpreting all the ways whiteness tries to hide.

In terms of projecting future transformations of the white minority, there seem to be three options under discussion. Some liberals, such as sociologist Richard Alba and historian David Hollinger, imagine an easy evolution to a post-racial order in which a racially diverse professional-managerial class sets the tone for tolerance and inclusion for

the rest of the society. The significance of race will wither away, and the capitalist need for ever more bright and young research and design teams will promote the improvement of urban education.

The continuing need for a vulnerable class of serfs, and the immense utility of racism and sexism in securing this end, is mystifyingly ignored by these sunny optimists. This vision of inevitable progress also fails to take into account the lesson of New York City itself, in which a white power structure has remained entrenched despite the fact that whites are in the minority.

A second group, such as historians David Roediger and Noel Ignatiev, who are leaders in the “Race Traitor” movement, has been arguing heatedly in favor of eliminating the white race. They do not mean an ethnic cleansing, but more of a group suicide in the metaphorical sense of refusing to accept the designation white. In favor of what, one might wonder? The main tactic here is refusal, toward the laudable aim of refusing white privilege, but with an unclear idea of what will replace what has been refused.

Refusing to avow one’s whiteness may also feed into the post-racial illusion that progressive coalitions can ignore issues of race.

Clearly, younger whites who have disavowed racism and embraced varied and assertive forms of non-white culture have shown, by their dress and demeanor, a happy desire to look less white, or at least, to borrow a feminist phrase, to be less white-identified. This quest for a reverse assimilation took pronounced form in *Avatar* in which the disabled working-class hero managed to shed his whiteness entirely by the movie’s end and become one with the blue people. Unfortunately for the cause of antiracism, our hero Jake Sully also manages to master all the ways of the indigenous people, nab the sexy royal daughter, win glory as the greatest warrior, save the day and, in short, assimilate with his cultural domina-

tion intact. This represents the fantasy of perhaps more than a few white refuseniks who imagine a multi-colored, sexy and prosperous future in which they can lose their uncomfortable tie to an uncomfortable past.

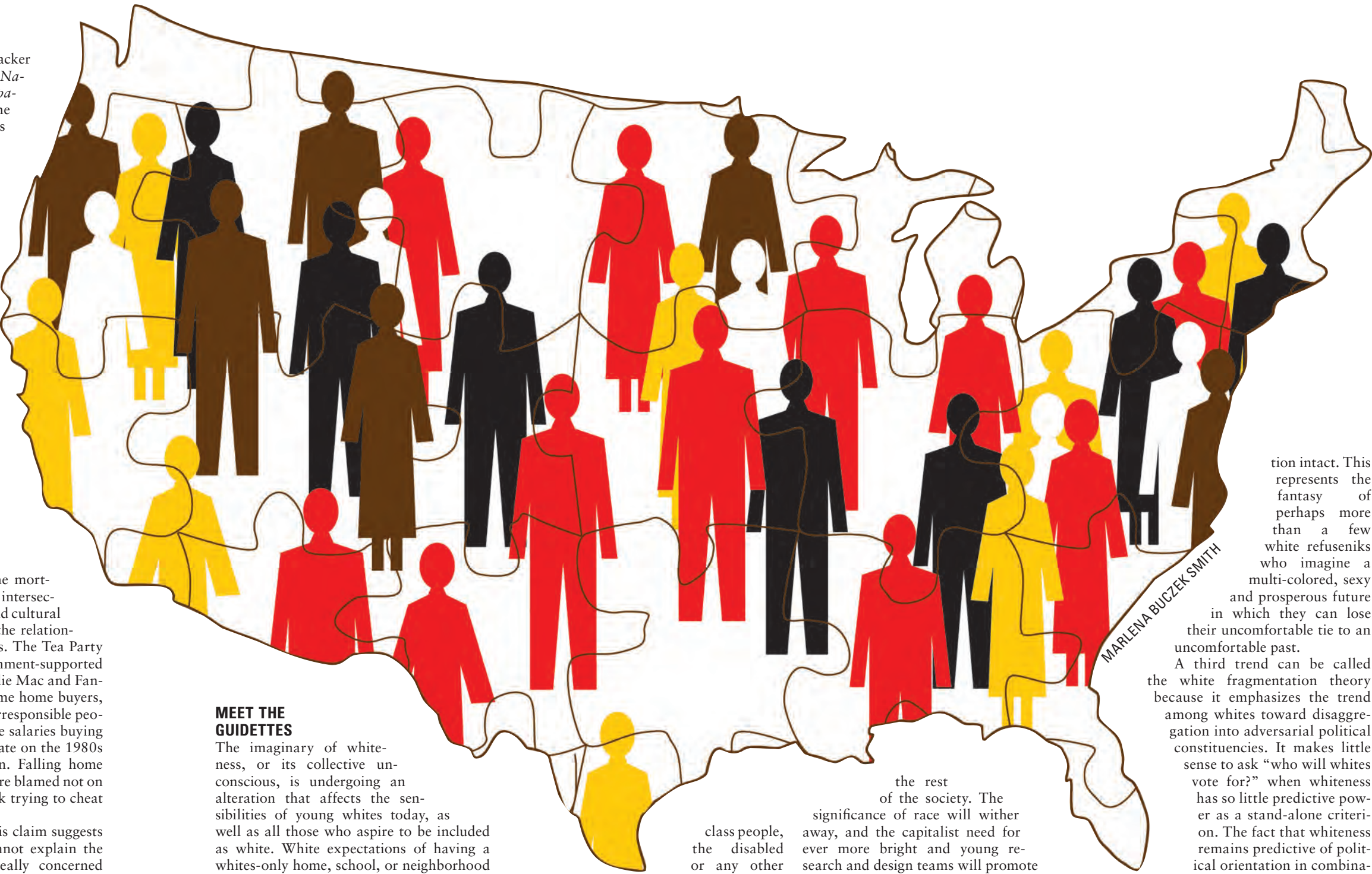
A third trend can be called the white fragmentation theory because it emphasizes the trend among whites toward disaggregation into adversarial political constituencies. It makes little sense to ask “who will whites vote for?” when whiteness has so little predictive power as a stand-alone criterion. The fact that whiteness remains predictive of political orientation in combination with urban, union and gender status suggests that, while still a substantive category of identity, whiteness is becoming more mediated by other markers than ever before. It certainly does not confer any security or economic stability.

Some believe that all the new racial categories may have a diminishing effect on the power of race. In the latest census, the ability to check more than one box means that a full 63 racial types are now recognized. The singular significance of race, Nell Painter suggests, loses its punch when it gets diluted to this degree. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that a proliferation of categories and mixtures can easily coexist with various forms of racisms, as it has in Latin America for centuries. Some are nonetheless hopeful that the current trend is less an expansion of types than a muddying of distinctions that will render racism’s directive more obscure.

What will eventually develop in the United States will undoubtedly have its own dynamic given our particular history and mix of groups and the forms of resistance we develop. In other words, the future depends not on demographics, but on what we choose to do.

What remains beyond question is that whiteness will no longer operate as an invisible norm. This means that people will have to think about what it means to be white, what it has meant and what it might mean in the future.

Linda Martín Alcoff, professor of philosophy at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, is writing a book on the future of whiteness and is (roughly) half-white herself. For more info, go to [alcoff.com](http://alcoff.com).





# Boycott Israel Movement Creates 'Sea Change'

BY ALEX KANE

**M**odeled on the international campaign of economic and political pressure that helped bring an end to South African apartheid nearly two decades ago, the growing boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement targeting Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories has notched notable victories of late.

Achievements include the announcement in April that the flagship London outlet of Ahava, an Israeli cosmetics company that reportedly manufactures its products in an illegal West Bank settlement, is losing its lease in response to years of protest. In February, legendary folk singer Pete Seeger joined a roster of artists honoring the boycott of Israel, including Elvis Costello, Dustin Hoffman, Gil Scott-Heron, Johnny Depp and the Pixies.

Defenders of Israel dismiss these victories as minor irritants, but the government has reacted with alarm. In February the Knesset gave initial approval to a bill criminalizing advocacy of BDS. Israeli commentators, including the influential Tel Aviv-based Reut Institute, have called the BDS movement a "strategic threat" to the state of Israel. And the United States, Israel's patron, has joined the chorus of critics. "When academics from Israel are boycotted — this is not objecting to a policy — this is anti-Semitism," Hannah Rosenthal, the State Department's envoy on combating anti-Semitism, said in an April 2 speech.

Rosenthal's statement came right after the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem approved a long-delayed visa for Omar Barghouti, a leading figure in the BDS movement. Author of the new book, *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights*, Barghouti was forced to postpone a tour of U.S. college campuses after his visa was held up for four months. In response an international campaign bombarded the consulate with phone calls and emails.

The attempt at scuttling Barghouti's tour comes as no surprise in the context of increased U.S. and Israeli government scrutiny of the BDS movement's growing popularity. Barghouti is a founding member of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, and award-winning journalist Max Blumenthal refers to Barghouti as "one of the BDS movement's most effective strategists and promoters."

I met up with Barghouti after his publisher, Haymarket Books, rescheduled his tour for April. Sitting in a crowded coffee shop in Manhattan, Barghouti talked about building on his experience as an anti-apartheid campaigner by focusing his attention on U.S. college campuses. "When I was in the anti-apartheid movement, we knew that we won when Columbia, Stanford, Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton divested. That was the beginning of the end for the apartheid system in South Africa."

Barghouti describes his book as "about a

movement that's still growing very rapidly, in fact, and changing and transforming and gaining many more supporters. [The book is] taking stock of the main intellectual basis for the movement, the main achievements, the main challenges and where we go forward from here."

The movement has three demands: an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and the dismantling of the separation barrier, equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel

and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. To meet these goals, the BDS movement advocates boycotting Israeli products and institutions, divesting from companies profiting from the occupation and government sanctions on Israel.

Critics of BDS allege that the movement seeks to "delegitimize" Israel. Barghouti dismisses such charges: "It's at best hypocritical, unfounded and totally baseless. In the anti-apartheid movement in the South Afri-

can days — which I was a part of — no one claimed that opposing apartheid in South Africa was delegitimizing South Africans, Afrikaners, whites, English South Africans. It was seen as delegitimizing apartheid, as it was .... We're delegitimizing occupation, apartheid and denial of rights. We're not delegitimizing any people as such."

It's clear from the responses of powerful governments that the BDS movement is chipping away at key bastions of support for Israel in the West — exactly the movement's goal, says Barghouti. "I think we've already won the battle for hearts and minds in many places in the West, especially in Western Europe. ... Recent polls show Europeans view Israel, together with North Korea, Iran and Pakistan, as the most important threats to world peace. So, Israel is down there in that league, and the BDS movement has played a key role."

But in the United States the stakes are even higher. Barghouti says, "It's too early to mention a real, substantial shift in the [mainstream] discourse in the U.S. on the Palestinian-Israeli colonial conflict," but at the grassroots level and on college campuses there is "a sea change in terms of the discourse."

For example, New York University's Students for Justice in Palestine just kicked off a divestment campaign on their campus, and students at the University of Arizona have recently launched a similar effort.

The BDS movement in the United States is up against powerful forces. At the urging of the Israeli government, organizations such as the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs have pledged to spend \$6 million in the next three years to combat BDS initiatives. Nonetheless, left-wing Jewish groups such as the Zionist group Meretz USA have begun to embrace the logic of boycott. A prime example is Jewish Voice for Peace, which is currently leading a campaign to pressure the TIAA-CREF retirement fund to drop holdings from companies that profit from the occupation.

"Many Jewish groups who were previously sitting on the fence before the Israeli massacre in Gaza took sides in support of Palestinian rights after Gaza. Increasingly, they're moving in the direction of BDS," says Barghouti.

Some activists have argued that the BDS movement may now also benefit from the Arab uprisings, which have captivated and inspired many Americans, as seen by the union protests in Wisconsin.

"Most of the Arab uprisings give credit to the Palestinian intifada, the first intifada, as the main inspiration for their revolutions. In turn, we are very inspired by the peoples' revolutions, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. Most importantly, there's been a drastic, irreversible transformation in the balance of powers after the Egyptian revolution," Barghouti says.





# What Goldstone Wrought

By PHILIP WEISS

*Editor's note: The report by the U.N. Human Rights Council fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict of 2008-2009, known as the "Goldstone Report," was groundbreaking for potentially holding Israel to account for war crimes committed during its assault on Gaza, which resulted in at least 900 civilian deaths and 5,000 wounded. In April the Washington Post published an op-ed by Richard Goldstone in which he questioned the findings of the report.*

Philip Weiss, an editor of the Mondoweiss blog, interviewed Norman Finkelstein, a noted scholar and dogged critic of Israel, about the controversy. Following are excerpts from that interview.

**PHILIP WEISS:** You write in your paper that [Goldstone's reconsideration] might pave the way to further attacks.

**NORMAN FINKELSTEIN:** It depends. First of all, there's been the tit for tat going on for a long time, so he is not personally culpable for the current tit for tat. If, however, this climaxes in a second massacre on the scale of Operation Cast Lead 1, then of course he's responsible; he would have given Israel the impunity it needed; otherwise it could not have launched a second attack on Gaza.

**PW:** I often quote the title of your book, *This Time We Went Too Far*, and I infer from that, not so much they learned their lesson, but there's less impunity. They understand that this operation, whatever it did or didn't do, really hurt their image around the world.

**NF:** ... The problem I have with your argument is that it's premised on the notion that Israelis think that they have another option except the resort to massive force. But that's just not how Israelis think. The Israeli mentality is the Arabs only understand the language of force, and if they get out of hand, you have to go in with the big stick or big club and break some skulls. For Israel the big problem with Goldstone is that it was preventing them from launching future wars. ...

**PW:** Larry Derfner and Bernard Avishai have suggested that Israelis have misgivings about all that destruction they perpetrated, to no end.

**NF:** I don't think that's entirely true. They did achieve something. Just as they achieved something in Lebanon in 2006. It was quite clear that henceforth Hezbollah was very careful not to provoke an Israeli attack, after July/August 2006, because Hezbollah knew that an Israeli attack would alienate the whole population against Hezbollah. So during the Gaza assault, Hezbollah was very quiet ... and the reason was obvious, because they knew the Lebanese would turn their wrath on Hezbollah if it seemed as if they had provoked a war in defense of not Lebanese but Gazans. ... In the case of Gaza, it had its successes. It turned a lot of the population against Hamas, which is why Hamas had to suddenly inflate the figures for the number of its people killed, because the people were saying, it was Hamas's reckless decisions that caused the attack. I don't agree but that's not the point ... Hamas wants to claim a victory where there was no battlefield defeat of Israel and where there was just death and destruction. ...

**PW:** You're saying that these operations were effective.

**NF:** There is nothing that doesn't have an underside. Everything is on balance. On balance Israel got some things out of it. It also suffered some deficits. ...

**PW:** But it's equivocal.

**NF:** There was equivocation because in this case, they were going to have to pay a price, because of the Goldstone Report, which they'd never had to pay. ... They have already paid several prices — the loss of immunity to Israeli diplomats and soldiers who traveled abroad, the threats of universal jurisdiction being used against them, and some alienation, not qualitative yet but quantitative, in the diaspora Jewish communities, they paid a price. But on balance ... more than 90 percent of Israelis afterwards continued to support the Israeli assault. So Israeli society was not exactly appalled or even against what the Israeli government did because they don't pay any price.

... [T]hreats of legal culpability [create a] very real difficulty for Israel to launch future wars, and that for Israel is a disaster. ... That's exactly why they're fearful of the revolts in the Arab world. They don't think that Egypt is going to attack, whether the Muslim Brotherhood or anyone else comes to power. What they're afraid of is that an Egypt led by a figure like ElBaradei, a comparable figure to Erdogan in Turkey, just won't let Israel carry on in their reckless and ruthless fashion. Just like [Prime Minister Recep] Erdogan said when Israel was saber-rattling against Lebanon a half year ago, Erdogan visited Beirut and said, "Israel, cut it out." Now you know ElBaradei gave an interview ... in which he said the same thing. If Israel attacks Gaza we're not going to stand idly by, and that's what Israel's afraid of. It's afraid that between Iran, Turkey and Egypt, the three main regional powers, each of them saying that they're not going to stand idly by, that Israel's going to lose its war option, and that's what it feared with the repercussions of the Goldstone report. ...

**PW:** The retraction shows that you need to count on the movement people, not the mainstreamers.

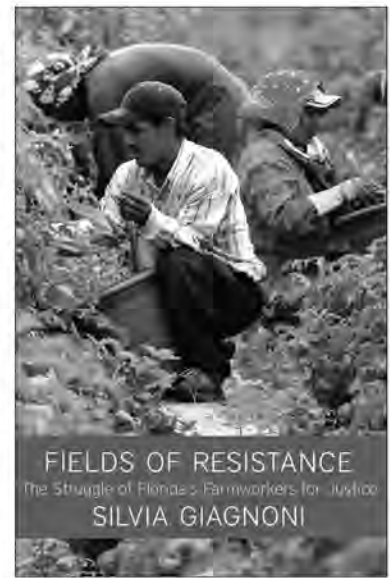
**NF:** Goldstone freed up a lot of Jews to criticize Israel, that's clear, and now that he's recanted, no one's really going to trust future Goldstones.

Look, there were three strategies ... that have been tested to deal with Israel's occupation. One is nonviolent civil disobedience whether in Bil'in or flotillas. A second strand has been the BDS. And a third strand has been holding Israel legally culpable. And the third strand was the Goldstone strategy, so to speak, holding Israel legally culpable. What was so disastrous about what Goldstone did is now it's going to be very tough to go in front of Palestinian or even activist audiences and talk about the legal weapon. Because they're all going to say "oh really — Goldstone!" He's delegitimized — you talk about delegitimizing Israel — he has delegitimized before the activist community the legal weapon for holding Israel accountable. ...

When Israel launches its next murderous war and you accuse it of having committed war crimes, what do you think they're going to say? Goldstone. It's just the reverse now; it's become their weapon. That's the most painful blow of all: Goldstone has now become their weapon.

*For the full interview, see [mondoweiss.net](http://mondoweiss.net).*

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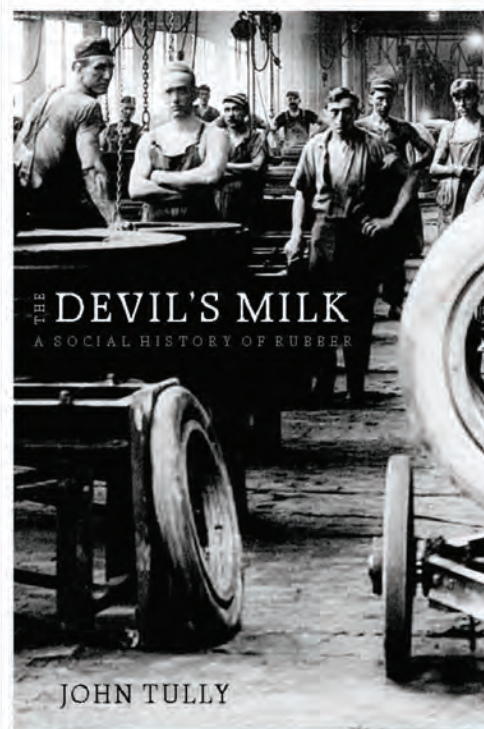
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# Egypt's Army and Muslim Brothers Join in a Dance of Power

BY JOSHUA STACHER

Egypt's popular revolution is now more than two months old, but so far it has produced a structural change in the governing coalition of Egypt without resulting in regime change per se.

That coalition, as it evolved under deposed President Hosni Mubarak, was made up of the president and his circle of rotating ministers, the president's son Gamal Mubarak's economic reform team, crony capitalists who grew rich under Mubarak and his predecessor Anwar Sadat, the intelligence and security services and the army. The regime's strategy for presenting a "democratic" face to the West was to place select ministers, crony capitalists and members of the economic reform team at the head of its electoral vehicle, the now-disbanded National Democratic Party (NDP).

The military, though it has been the prime beneficiary of aid packages from Washington, was an institution in decline as it was forced to compete for resources with the Interior Ministry and Gamal's team, composed mostly of a younger, flashier generation of crony capitalists. Reports during and after the revolution have likely overstated the military's role in the economy, which in fact has been shrinking. Mubarak's ouster allowed the military to return to prominence, while the disciples of the Washington Consensus were dropped from the ruling coalition and various police and intelligence services, purveyors of domestic spying and torture, were re-disciplined under the military's hierarchy.

## THE MILITARY'S DILEMMAS

As Egypt's citizenry commanded the initiative for the first time since the January 1977 bread riots, the army faced a predicament. Despite deploying tanks in the capital on Jan. 28, it seems to have calculated that its crowd control capacity was all or almost nothing. It confronted a Hobson's choice in the revolutionary situation between the grimmest of repression — firing automatic weapons at the assembled protesters — and the Interior Ministry's old techniques of tear gas and hand-to-hand combat that the crowds had already defeated. Debate has swirled around the question of whether an order to fire was given and disobeyed, but the question is moot. The military, once it determined that Mubarak could not survive, opted out of the Hobson's choice. Indeed, it staged shows of support for the crowds, going so far as to turn the turrets of tanks toward the presidential palace as revolutionaries gathered outside the building on the morning of Feb. 11, the day Mubarak was booted out.

Yet its decision not to disperse the crowds presented the military with a political problem. Since it had posed as the people's champion for 18 days, its crowd control capacity was even more restricted. Meanwhile, it was left holding Mubarak's bag of hated policies from the emergency law to enforcement of the blockade of Gaza. The NDP was discredited, demobilized (save for some hired thugs) and subsequently dissolved by a court order issued April 16. Additionally, the police were gone from the streets, which left an ambient disorder and lawlessness in Cairo and other cities. This feeling was sharpened

by reports that state security agents had emptied several prisons of convicts.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces needed means of outreach, not repression, as it entered this new political era. Without a plan, they built upon what they inherited from Vice President 'Umar Sulayman, who in his 12 days in power had begun to design a way out of the predicament before he and Mubarak were jettisoned.

On Feb. 6, with the wounds of open battle in Tahrir Square still fresh, Sulayman called for "national dialogue" between the regime and the opposition. Organizations representing protesting youth eschewed participation in such efforts until Mubarak stepped down, but other elements accepted, including formal opposition parties, self-appointed "wise men" who were trying to broker a constitutional compromise and the Muslim Brothers.

According to defectors from the Brothers' ranks, the initial dialogue led to a series of secret meetings between Sulayman and the Islamist group in which the vice president asked the Brothers to send their members home from the square in exchange for an expanded political role. After Sulayman departed, this agreement seems to have stayed in place for Ahmad Shafiq's short-lived government, which lasted from Jan. 31 to March 3, and it appears to still remain operative now that 'Isam Sharaf is premier.

When Sharaf was introduced to the masses in Tahrir Square on March 4, he claimed, "I am here to draw my legitimacy from you. You are the ones to whom legitimacy belongs." A Muslim Brother leader, Muhammad al-Baltagi, appeared by his side. Earlier, the Supreme Council had appointed a Muslim Brother to the eight-member committee charged with drafting amendments to the suspended 1971 constitution.

## MODELS OF ACQUIESCENCE

Muhammad Habib, a former deputy guide of the Brothers, says, "The military realized they could not control domestic stability yet still uphold unpopular foreign policies. They are using the Brothers to serve as this domestic source of stability." While it is impossible to know for sure if such a deal was struck, the patterns of interaction emerging in post-Mubarak Egypt seem to confirm the thesis.

Since the fall of Mubarak, the Brothers' decision-making body, the Guidance Office, has been a reliable partner of the generals. The Brothers' communiqués have been

filled with praise for the Supreme Council's pronouncements. When, shortly after Mubarak's exit, sectarian clashes broke out south of Cairo, the Brothers dispatched teams there to lead reconciliation talks be-

League Secretary-General Amr Moussa.

Moussa has dissented from the Supreme Council's course, voting "no" on the amendments and publicly criticizing the army's management of the transition. For some,



JULIE LACQUER

tween Copts and Muslims. They continue to support the army's goal of "national unity" through outreach to the Coptic church hierarchy and meetings with Christian youth.

Meanwhile, the Brothers' leadership explored the rank and file to quit protesting and return to work for the sake of the economy, and then to vote "yes" on the March 19 referendum on the constitutional amendments, which was endorsed by 77 percent of voters at the polls. Indeed, the Brothers have been models of acquiescence compared to the man everyone thought would be the military's candidate in prospective elections, former Foreign Minister and serving Arab

League Secretary-General Amr Moussa. Moussa has dissented from the Supreme Council's course, voting "no" on the amendments and publicly criticizing the army's management of the transition. For some,

such as Muhammad Habib, the reason for the apparent military-Muslim Brother entente lies in groupthink inside the Guidance Office, which he says has blinded them to the role they are playing. Habib believes the Brothers badly miscalculated in betting on the army to oversee a transition favorable to the Brothers' interests. He scoffs, "After they smelled freedom, they ran behind the council."

In interviews, the Brothers say past repression and their adjustment to the newly unfettered political space affects their actions today. Khayrat al-Shatir, a senior Brother who has spent 12 of the last 19



years in prison, explained, “The group recognizes that times have changed. We cannot manage our meetings and information in the way that we had. But this was never a function of secrecy, as analysts said. It was because of the oppressive climate in which we had to operate.”

#### INTERNAL INTIFADA

Muslim Brother youths have reportedly mounted an internal intifada, presumably against the Brothers’ cooperation with the army, but leaders are not forthcoming on the topic. Muhammad Saad al-Kitatni, head of the Brothers’ delegation in the parliament serving from 2005 to 2010, says vaguely, “There are some ideas coming in, but there are also discussions taking place. The youth just met with the general guide last week.” Al-Shatir contends that most youth who object to the society’s present course are not full members of the Muslim Brothers, only sympathizers.

As for future plans, the Brothers are thin on details — whether the question is which districts they plan to contest in September’s legislative elections or under what banner they will run. Al-Kitatni has been named head of a new Freedom and Justice Party affiliated with the Brothers, but little information is available about this party other than the stipulation that “any Egyptian citizen that agrees with the program and internal platform can join.” When asked who else from the Brothers would be joining, al-Kitatni responded, “People are still discussing this. Right now, it’s just me.”

Before the revolution, the Muslim Brothers were highly critical of the methods Egypt’s rulers used to circumscribe the political process. Not today. On March 26, for example, the Supreme Council released a draft law that included a ban on parties founded on sectarian, religious or regional bases, just like the Mubarak-era law. Under Mubarak, this clause was widely understood as targeting the Brothers.

Rather than protest this fresh injustice, however, the Brothers took it in stride. Essam al-Erian, a prominent spokesman for the group, shrugged it off: “The Muslim Brothers group will not turn into a party. The political party we are now founding is a civil one, based on the principles of citizenship.” Perhaps the Brothers are willing to play the same game with the army that they played with Mubarak, accepting that their society is technically outlawed and cannot enter the political arena except under thin disguises. If so, the military-Muslim Brothers alliance might ensure a degree of social peace, but would hardly be a step toward a transparent and truly free political system in Egypt.

#### WILL THEY STAY OR WILL THEY GO?

A report published in late February by the International Crisis Group argues that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is keen to move to a civilian government as quickly as possible. The motive is to relieve the generals of political responsibility when the high expectations raised by the revolu-

tion deflate and discontent settles back in. But things may be changing.

First, one should not mistake the army’s reluctance to govern for an aversion to rule. The army is accustomed to ruling Egypt in some measure, though with a civilian visage. The Supreme Council was compelled to take the stage when Mubarak was dismissed, but it would happily return behind the curtains if it were confident that a civilian government would defer to military prerogatives.

**‘The military realized they could not control domestic stability yet still uphold unpopular foreign policies. They are using the Brothers to serve as this domestic source of stability.’**

**—Muhammad Habib,  
former Muslim Brothers official**

The question is which political figure would be credible, to the West and the Egyptian people, as a face to “civilianize” the regime.

Much speculation has centered on Amr Moussa, whose mostly unblemished record of cooperation with the system seemingly made him an ideal candidate to protect the military’s political and economic interests while appearing to represent change. Such a deal would produce an informal closed power-sharing agreement excluding the very democratizing forces that ushered in the military as governors.

Yet by rejecting the referendum despite the military’s widely known support for the proposed constitutional amendments, Moussa and other formally announced presidential candidates threw in their lot with revolutionary elements opposed to incremental change. Are these candidates out of touch with the populace that supports the military, the Brothers and a fast transition? And can the army, which returned to glory for sending Mubarak off into the Sharm al-Sheikh sunset, simply walk away despite enjoying such broad and deep popularity? Most say it is too soon to tell.

#### THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES

The revolution is far from over. Yet, as the Islamists continue to expand their political influence, many of the secular revolutionary forces may have second thoughts. If the Brothers racked up large numbers of seats in September’s parliamentary elections, how would Egyptian society and Egypt’s external patrons respond?

Given such uncertainties, it is possible that someone like Army Chief of Staff Gen. Sami ‘Inan could run for executive office. Like many of his fellow generals, ‘Inan is now using the same social networking tools that helped the revolutionaries publicize their achievements in January and February.

Most, however, think that another general-president is a non-starter, with the liberal Ghad party leader Wa’il Nawwara calling such a prospect “impossible.”

If putting up its own candidate seems too brazen, the military could run a candidate such as the docile new Prime Minister ‘Isam Sharaf, who then could appoint a vice presidential candidate who happens to be a former general.

Over the last few months the Supreme Council has issued increasingly Mubarak-like laws. On March 23, the council’s ministerial cabinet promulgated a new law saying that those who harm the economy with public demonstrations could be fined up to 500,000 Egyptian pounds (over \$83,000) and/or imprisoned. The law targets sectors like the police, which have struck continuously since Feb. 11, but it could be applied to the industrial actions and street protests that composed the revolution.

Similarly, on March 30, Maj. Gen. Mamdouh Shahin announced a “constitutional declaration” wherein the amendments ratified by referendum were nine of 63 articles, most of which reaffirmed laws of the Mubarak era. One of the more familiar stipulations was the provision that parties cannot be religious, sectarian or regional in character. For many, the declaration was a deep disappointment revealing the Supreme Council to be disdainful of consultative governance or even explanation of its reasoning.

Many Egyptians have begun to grumble about the military’s increasingly prominent role. A well-attended April 1 protest in Tahrir Square called upon Field Marshal Husayn Tantawi, Mubarak’s minister of defense, to resign from the Supreme Council and demanded swifter action toward putting the men of the deposed regime on trial for corruption and other offenses. In a move that surprised many, the military imprisoned Mubarak’s two sons on April 13 and has reportedly detained Husni Mubarak himself in a hospital. But Mubarak was already sacrificed to the crowds; the real test of the army’s commitment to democracy lies ahead.

The March 19 referendum may have led the army to bank on a silent majority of Egyptians who will cling to the institution they have known for the past 60 years in place of the Brothers or protesters who are seen as disrupting normal life. At the same time, discontent with the military is growing, and one can expect more popular mobilizations to safeguard the revolutionary process Egyptians began by heroically overthrowing their dictator of 30 years.

A great contest to define the center is under way and the outcome remains unknown. The only certainty is that after an exhilarating spring, Egypt is in for a hot summer.

*Joshua Stacher is assistant professor of political science at Kent State University. This article was excerpted from a report originally published by the Middle East Research and Information Project, merip.org.*

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## REGICIDE

# Off With Their Heads!

BY ARUN GUPTA

Our ancestors once cowered before royalty they believed were divinity made corporeal. These days, supporters of monarchy are reduced to citing tourist revenue in defense of a barbaric relic.

Other rationales — the divine right of kings, a repository of tradition, moral paragons, manifestation of the state, a (barely) living national symbol — have long been eroded by the tides of the history. So the last excuse for the monarchy is that of the bean counters' ledger: the cost-benefit analysis.

Kate and William's royal nuptials will reportedly generate more than \$1 billion in economic activity, supposedly a boon for commoners who each proffer but a few pence for the \$60 million annual subsidy to the fusty Queen and her adulterous horse-faced brood. (Never mind that this sum excludes the costs of security, policing and vast estates and manors off-limits to the Exchequer; though at least a few years ago the royals were foiled in their attempt to heat their drafty castles by tapping public monies meant for indigents.)

Perhaps it would be tacky to mention that the wedding pageant will not have "any sort of lasting effect" on the economy. The public, however, doesn't seem to be listening. Brits "graced by The Presence [come] away like medieval peasants brushed by the royal fingers to cure the scrofula," sayeth the *Financial Times*. The real boon then may be to distract the serfs from higher taxes, galloping inflation, fewer jobs and public services under the axe.

Tackier still is commemorative merchandise like ashtrays — stub your cig in the face of the newlyweds; toilet seat covers — Kate and William can now grace your throne; or "regal prophylactics" — wrap your willie in a William condom for coitus with your fantasy Kate.

Raining on the parade, anti-monarchists say direct subsidies are \$180 million, or triple the amount usually cited. And the royals are downright plebian as a tourist attraction; the crowning glory, Windsor Castle, ranks as only the 17th most-visited tourist site in England, easily surpassed by the nearby Legoland.

Of course why would anyone want to fork over \$26 to gawk at Queen Liz's chambers and screech, "Ewww, loovly"? Many more prefer to traipse through the Tower of London, once a royal residence, but far more notorious as an executioner's ball and medieval Guantánamo crammed with racks, scold's bridles and head crushers.

If the only justification left is tourism, then it's time to imagine more lucrative schemes. Eliminating the royals would first free up all those tax dollars spent on such vital activities as Charles and Camilla's 12-day yacht tour of the Caribbean in 2008, a \$430,000 bargain.

If Clinton-era donors were willing to pony up \$100,000 for a White House sleepover, think of how many über-rich would spend a million or two for a bacchanalia in Buckingham Palace. Or how much revenue, taxes and jobs all the royal landholdings would generate as exclusive hotels and chic party rentals. Indian steel tycoon Laxmi Mittal, for example, reportedly dropped more than \$50 million in 2004 for his daughter's wedding, which included an engagement ceremony at Louis XIV's old crib of Versailles Palace.

But what to do with the royals, whose pomp, ceremony and charity are meant to

hide the fact that they are the very embodiment of the idle rich. Prince Charles — the man who would be king who would be Camilla's tampon — is utterly useless as he long ago fulfilled his destiny of siring "an heir and a spare." Charles now fills his days peddling quackery such as his branded "Duchy Herbals Detox Tincture," ranting that Galileo is to blame for consumerism and hatching dimwitted real-estate schemes, including putting his charity foundation in



peril for a \$40-million loan to purchase an estate, which has since lost 80 percent of its value.

There is always regicide. A bit extreme, but it would only be taking the lead from London protesters who cried "Off with their heads" while attacking a Rolls Royce-bound Charles and Camilla last December. Plus, with media saturation, what better way to capture viewers' attention than televising a 16th-century-style beheading of the royal family.

Regicide has a storied past. During revolutions, most monarchs manage to escape popular wrath for murder, plunder, torture and other crimes of absolutism. But in the revolutions that define modernity — the French and Russian — the royalty met a well-deserved fate. The depredations they visited upon their countries are precisely why Louis XVI was guillotined and the Romanovs shot. Other less-known nobility — King Faisal II of Iraq, George I of Greece and Umberto I of Italy — were cut down by bullets for their crimes.

But, whingers may object, the Windsors while parasites are a mostly harmless lot. It may seem that way with all the garden parties and polo matches, but as head of a British Empire (rebranded as the Commonwealth of Nations) soaked in the blood of its forced subjects, the royals have never paid for their crimes. (For a terrifying account of the tens of millions killed by imperial British policy in Asia in the late 19th century, see *Late Victorian Holocausts* by Mike Davis.)

What better way to help the English to topple a government rooted in medieval despotism, overcome their class deference and end a culture of hereditary idiocy than chopping off a few royal heads?

Plus, imagine putting the Queen's head in a jar on public display. It would be the ultimate tourist attraction.



# Welcome to the Grand Illusion

*The Illusion of Free Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order*  
 BERNARD HARCOURT  
 HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011

Those who talk the loudest about freedom are often the ones most inclined to place people behind bars. In *The Illusion of Free Markets*, University of Chicago Professor Bernard Harcourt attempts a genealogy of the seemingly paradoxical coupling of the discourse of free markets and the practice of mass incarceration in the contemporary United States.

Although *The Illusion of Free Markets* is primarily a work of intellectual history, Harcourt starts from his interest in how the ideological fiction of the “free market” helps produce contemporary U.S. mass incarceration. He posits that the key to understanding what he calls “neoliberal penalty” is that maintaining “law and order” has become one of the only acceptable forms of state intervention. Even those who decry the “distortions” of the marketplace caused by government interventions such as minimum-wage or rent-control laws support state involvement in policing the populace. While the marketplace is thought of as naturally self-ordering, in the realm of punishment, order must be imposed. Thus, looting in Iraq became an example of the messiness of freedom—in Donald Rumsfeld’s



famous phrase — while “broken windows” are not to be tolerated. Harcourt traces the root of this conception back beyond economists Milton Friedman and Gary Becker to figures such as Jeremy Bentham, Cesare Beccaria and the Physiocrats. Along the way, he carries out case studies of the Chicago Board of Trade and the grain trade in Paris prior to the French Revolution. Harcourt demonstrates that once you pierce the rhetoric of “free markets,” the Chicago Board of Trade con-

sists of regulation all the way down. On the other hand, he shows that the Parisian grain markets, often held up as examples of state hyper-regulation, were largely self-regulated and seen by many contemporaries as freedom-enhancing. Harcourt convincingly argues that not only is there no such thing as a free market, but in fact the discourse of free markets blinds us to the real political choices we face. Governments are always intervening in markets in one way or another, making

decisions that determine the distribution of resources. They are faced with an endless set of choices between the interests of debtors and creditors, renters and owners, taxpayers and banks, and so on. By buying into the rhetoric of self-regulating markets, we naturalize the choices made by the powerful under the cover of the “invisible hand” of the marketplace. While *The Illusion of Free Markets* is fascinating and incisive, it is unfortunately limited in scope. Tracing the intellectual pedigree of neoliberal penalty is no mean task, but the more interesting question is how the ideological fiction of markets as a naturally ordered, self-regulating sphere of freedom came to be adopted as conventional wisdom by both elites and the masses. It is notable that even those getting their pockets picked by the invisible hand often consider a belief in free markets to be simply common sense.

The left has a knack for ending up on the weak side of sound-bite battles. “Pro-choice” doesn’t sound as good as “pro-life,” while “fair trade” isn’t as appealing as “free trade.” No one seems to even have a good two-word alternative to “free markets.” But the important question is: freedom for whom to do what? In *The Illusion of Free Markets*, Harcourt does the essential work of bringing this issue to the fore.

—MATT WASSERMAN

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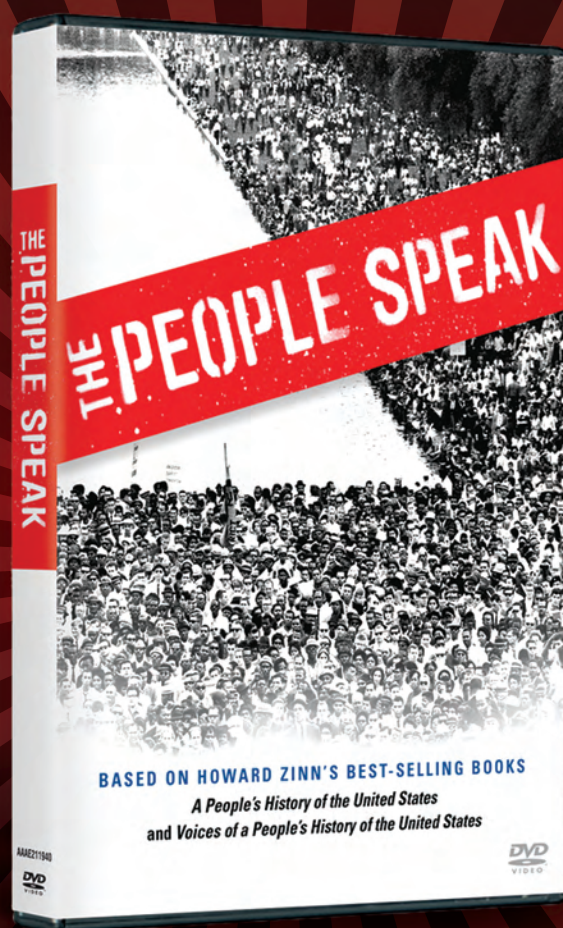
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